

Message Text

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S/S - MR. KUCHEL

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R 101800Z MAY 75

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

S E C R E T STATE 109673

EXDIS MILITARY ADDEE HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, SN, MY, TH, CB, AS

SUBJECT: VIEWS OF SINGAPORE PRIME MINISTER ON SOUTHEAST
ASIAN AFFAIRS

1. SUMMARY: PRIME MINISTER LEE SUGGESTS US MAINTAIN
ITS CALM FOR NEXT SIX MONTHS OR SO WHILE SOUTHEAST ASIA
SETTLES DOWN. HE SEES THAILAND AS NEXT MAJOR PROBLEM AREA.
HE EXPRESSES GREAT INTEREST IN INCREASED COOPERATION WITH
MALAYSIA, AND WOULD LIKE TO SEE U.S. TECHNICAL AND TRAIN-
ING SUPPORT FOR LATTER. BELIEVES KHMER ROUGE WILL
ELIMINATE SIHANOUK SUPPORTERS BUT HOPES CAMBODIAN
NATIONALISM WILL REASSERT SELF. UNIMPRESSED WITH
AUSTRALIAN PRIME MINISTER. END SUMMARY.

2. DEPUTY SECRETARY INGERSOLL AND ASSISTANT SECRETARY
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HABIB HAD EXTENSIVE EXCHANGE WITH PRIME MINISTER LEE

KUAN YEW IN COURSE OF PRIVATE DINNER WITH LEE AT LATTER'S HOTEL EVENING MAY 7. FOLLOWING ARE HIGHLIGHTS OF CONVERSATION:

3. IN WAKE OF VIETNAM, LEE BELIEVES US SHOULD MAINTAIN GREAT CALM, MAKE NO SUDDEN MOVES THAT WOULD BE MISINTERPRETED IN ASIA AND GIVE SITUATION ABOUT SIX MONTHS TO SETTLE DOWN.

4. DURING THAT TIME HE EXPECTS GREAT PROBLEMS TO ARISE IN THAILAND. HE CONSIDERS THAI GOVERNMENT WEAK AND UNLIKELY TO SURVIVE UNTIL YEAR'S END. HE IS NOT SURE THAI MILITARY, PARTICULARLY KRIT SIWARA, HAVE POLITICAL KNOW-HOW TO RESIST HANOI. HE BELIEVES THAI WILL SHIFT FROM SIDE TO SIDE AS THEY EVENTUALLY SEEK TO SURVIVE ONE WAY OR ANOTHER. HE BELIEVES WE SHOULD SHOW GREAT PATIENCE TOWARD THAI PUBLIC STATEMENTS WHICH, IN MOST CASES, WILL NOT REFLECT WHAT THEY REALLY BELIEVE. HE POINTS OUT THAT POWER BASE REMAINS IN THE MILITARY BUT IS INEFFECTUALLY MANAGED.

5. LEE IS EXTREMELY INTERESTED IN COOPERATING WITH RAZAK IN MALAYSIA IN MANNER MUCH MORE ADVANCED THAN HE HAS PREVIOUSLY ACCEPTED. HE BELIEVES THAT MALAYSIA AND SINGAPORE ARE GOING TO COME UNDER COMMUNIST PRESSURE WHEN THAILAND WEAKENS. HE HAS SPOKEN TO RAZAK OF IMPORTANCE OF SINGAPORE-MALAYSIA COOPERATION AND SOLICITS OUR ASSISTANCE IN TECHNICAL AND TRAINING AID. (RAZAK HAD RAISED QUESTION OF POSSIBLE U.S. TRAINING AND CREDIT SALES OF COUNTERINSURGENCY-RELATED MILITARY EQUIPMENT WITH HABIB DURING EARLIER MEETING IN NEW YORK MAY 2. LEE SAID HE HAD DISCUSSED THIS WITH RAZAK PRIOR TO THAT MEETING AND THE TWO OF THEM SAW EYE-TO-EYE).

6. LEE BELIEVES HE MUST NOW WORK WITH A BROADER SEGMENT OF UPPER MALAY LEADERSHIP AND GET THEM TO ACCEPT MORE REASONABLE APPROACH TO THE CHINESE AND OTHER MINORITY GROUPS IN MALAYSIA. THIS WOULD STRENGTHEN ANTI-COMMUNIST POSITION ON MALAY PENINSULA, WHICH IS LEE'S ULTIMATE OBJECTIVE. IN THIS GENERAL EFFORT, LEE HOPES FOR AMERICAN

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SUPPORT.

7. LEE EXPECTS THAI WILL BE LESS INTERESTED IN FIGHTING INSURGENTS ON MALAYSIAN BORDER, WHERE THERE ARE ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS PROBLEMS INVOLVED, AND THEY WILL CONCENTRATE MORE ON NORTHEAST INSURGENCY. HE HAS LITTLE FAITH IN THEIR MILITARY CAPABILITY, HOWEVER, AND BELIEVES IN THE END THEY WILL MAKE POLITICAL COMPROMISE WITH CHINA

AND HANOI AS BEST THEY CAN. IN THIS HE EXPECTS THEM TO RECEIVE HELP FROM CHINA, WHICH HE BELIEVES CONCERNED OVER HANOI'S INFLUENCE OVER INDOCHINA.

8. LEE SPOKE OF UNCERTAINTY OF KHMER ROUGE BEHAVIOUR BUT AGREED THAT SIHANOUK WILL NOT BE A MAJOR FACTOR IN CAMBODIA. HE SEES KHMER ROUGE ELIMINATING ANY ELEMENTS LIKELY TO SUPPORT SIHANOUK BUT IS HOPEFUL, NEVERTHELESS, THAT CAMBODIAN NATIONALISM WILL ASSERT ITSELF AS BUFFER AGAINST HANOI.

9. FINALLY, LEE HAD A NUMBER OF DISPARAGING REMARKS TO MAKE ABOUT GOUGH WHITLAM, WHOM HE OBVIOUSLY LOOKS UPON AS SOFT-HEADED AND UNREALISTIC IN HIS VIEW OF ASIA. KISSINGER

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